

## Message Text

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11

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-10 A-01 /066 W

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R 170900Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 949

INFO AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 2729

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, US

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE RELOCATION OF FOREIGN MINISTRY

BEGIN SUMMARY: MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
PRINCE SAUD WILL BE SPENDING A MAJORITY OF HIS TIME  
IN RIYADH AND A MINORITY IN JIDDA. PRINCE FAHD  
FAVORS MOVING MINISTRY AND EMBASSIES TO RIYADH, BUT  
WE DOUBT IF THIS COULD BE DONE MUCH BEFORE 1985. END SUMMARY

1. IN HIS SECOND MEETING WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY OF  
DEFENSE CLEMENTS, GENERAL BROWN AND AMBASSADOR AKINS  
CROWN PRINCE FAHD ON APRIL 15 SAID THAT THE FOREIGN  
MINISTRY AND THE EMBASSIES WOULD BE MOVED TO RIYADH.  
HE SAID THE SITE OF THE OLD AIRPORT--ABOUT SEVEN  
SQUARE KILOMETERS--WOULD BE SET ASIDE FOR THIS DIPLO-  
MATIC QUARTER. OF COURSE, CONSTRUCTION COULD NOT  
BEGIN UNTIL THE NEW AIRPORT IS FINISHED IN FOUR OR  
FIVE YEARS. BUT HE SPOKE WITH CONFIDENCE  
AS IF THE FINAL DECISION HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN.

2. WE UNDERSTAND FROM OTHER MINISTERS THAT  
THIS IS FAR FROM THE CASE. IN FACT, THEY  
HAVE SAID THAT FAHD IS THE ONLY MINISTER PUSHING  
FOR THE TRANSFER AND KING KHALID AT LEAST FOR  
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THE MOMENT IS BACKING THE MAJORITY.

3. FAHD'S REASONS FOR MOVING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND ITS DEPENDENCIES ARE VALID: HAVING A FULLY FUNCTIONING EMBASSY 700 MILES FROM THE DECISION MAKING CENTER OF THE COUNTRY IS, TO SAY THE LEAST, INCONVENIENT. BUT THE OTHERS ALSO HAVE POINTS OF CONSIDERABLE VALIDITY. THE GOVERNMENT (OR AT LEAST THE MAIN MINISTERS) IS IN JIDDA OR TAIF AT LEAST FOUR MONTHS OF THE YEAR, AND GIVEN KHALID'S LOVE FOR TAIF, THIS MAY BE EVEN LONGER. DURING THAT PERIOD AN EMBASSY IN JIDDA WOULD BE MORE CONVENIENT THAN IN RIYADH. THEN, MANY OF THE SMALLER MOSLEM EMBASSIES ARE IN THE COUNTRY ONLY TO SERVE THE PILGRIMAGE; THEY WOULD NOT WANT TO BE LOCATED ANY PLACE OTHER THAN JIDDA, THERE IS ALSO THE QUESTION (IMPORTANT TO FAISAL BUT LESS IMPORTANT TODAY) OF NOT OFFENDING THE HEDJAZ BY REMOVING ONE OF ITS FEW REMAINING SYMBOLS OF AUTHORITY. FINALLY, AND A GOVERNING FACTOR FOR THE MOMENT, IS THE INABILITY OF RIYADH TO HANDLE THE INFLUX OF FOREIGNERS THAT WOULD COME WITH ITS ACCEPTANCE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. (THE BANKS AND MANY BUSINESS INTERESTS WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY FOLLOW THIS LEAD.) WHILE BUILDINGS COULD PRESUMABLY BE BUILT, RIYADH IS ALREADY STRAINING ITS WATER RESOURCES. DISTILLATION OF WATER FROM THE PERSIAN GULF AND PUMPING IT TO RIYADH IS THE ONLY PRACTICAL SUGGESTION, AND THIS WOULD BE ENOURMOUSLY EXPENSIVE--EVEN FOR SAUDI ARABIA.

4. RPINCE SAUD, THE NEW MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SEEMS TO BE MAKING A COMPROMISE. HE IS ENLARGING HIS OFFICE IN RIYADH AND PLANS TO SPEND FOUR DAYS A WEEK IN THERE. HE WILL BE ONLY THREE DAYS IN JIDDA, AND DOES NOT SEEM TO BE MAKING EVEN THAT. HE WILL ALSO TRANSFER SUBSTANTIVE AND PROTOCOL OFFICERS TO RIYADH.

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5. COMMENT: SAUD'S DECISION WILL MAKE IT EVEN MORE NECESSARY FOR EMBASSY OFFICERS TO SPEND TIME IN RIYDH. POSSIBLY WE WILL SOON BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO OPEN OFFICIAL "EMBASSY ANNEXES" IN RIYADH, BUT FOR THE TIME BEING WE ASSUME THE EMBASSIES WILL BE REQUIRED TO STAY IN JIDDA. EVEN IF THE SAG DECIDE TO MOVE

THE FOREIGN MINISTRY TO RIYADH, WE DOUBT THAT  
IT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED MUCH BEFORE 1985.  
AKINS

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